

Last week, Evansville water customers received a notice in their utility bills. The compliance problem had already been resolved; however, the notice was required by the state and federal law to inform customers of a violation of the maximum contaminant level (MCL) for gross alpha particles in the Evansville water supply.

Regular sampling and testing of the drinking water supply at Well #2 on April 20, 2011, exceeded the 15 pCi/L maximum contaminant level (MCL) for gross alpha particles. This was not an immediate risk. If it had been, customers would have been notified immediately.

When the test results were received in August 2011, the water utility initiated quarterly testing according to chapter NR 809 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code. The quarterly sampling enabled calculating compliance on a rolling annual average.

The average of the April 20, September 7, and October 20, 2011, and February 15, 2012, tests was 15.7 pCi/L; this exceeded the MCL and necessitated the notice. With subsequent testing on April 18 and July 25, 2012, the rolling annual average is now at 11.1 pCi/L and below the MCL. The utility will continue quarterly sampling and calculating compliance based on a rolling annual average.

Certain minerals are radioactive and may emit a form of radiation known as alpha radiation. This is a natural, environmental occurrence.

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets drinking water standards and has determined that alpha emitting radionuclides may be of a health concern at certain levels of exposure. Some people who drink water containing alpha emitters in excess of the MCL over many years may have an increased risk of getting cancer. The EPA has set the drinking water standard for alpha emitters at 15 pCi/L to protect against cancer risk.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has advised us that the standard is based on the consumption of one-half gallon of water per day during an entire lifetime, and that the immediate health risk is negligible. The water is safe to drink, and people do not need to use an alternative water supply, for example bottled water. However, if someone has specific health concerns, they may consult their doctor.

Again, the Evansville water utility will continue quarterly sampling and calculating compliance based on a rolling annual average. We are also examining options in case these contaminants do become elevated in Well #2 again in the future. The utility continues to exercise its best efforts to achieve compliance with all drinking water standards.

Water customers with questions regarding the safety of our drinking water may contact Water & Light Superintendent Mark Sendelbach at 882-2288.